

THE STORY OF MYSORE PALACE

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Mysore - a royal city and a cultural capital of Karnataka is one of the most attractive tourist centres. This beautiful and the enchanting building exhibits superb architectural styles and is a conglomeration of various artistic styles of India. The temple of Goddess Chamundeswari, the world famous Krishnarajasagar dam and Brindavan Garden and the renowned palace are really a sight for the Gods. The cultural festival called *Navarathri* attracts thousands of people from different parts of the world



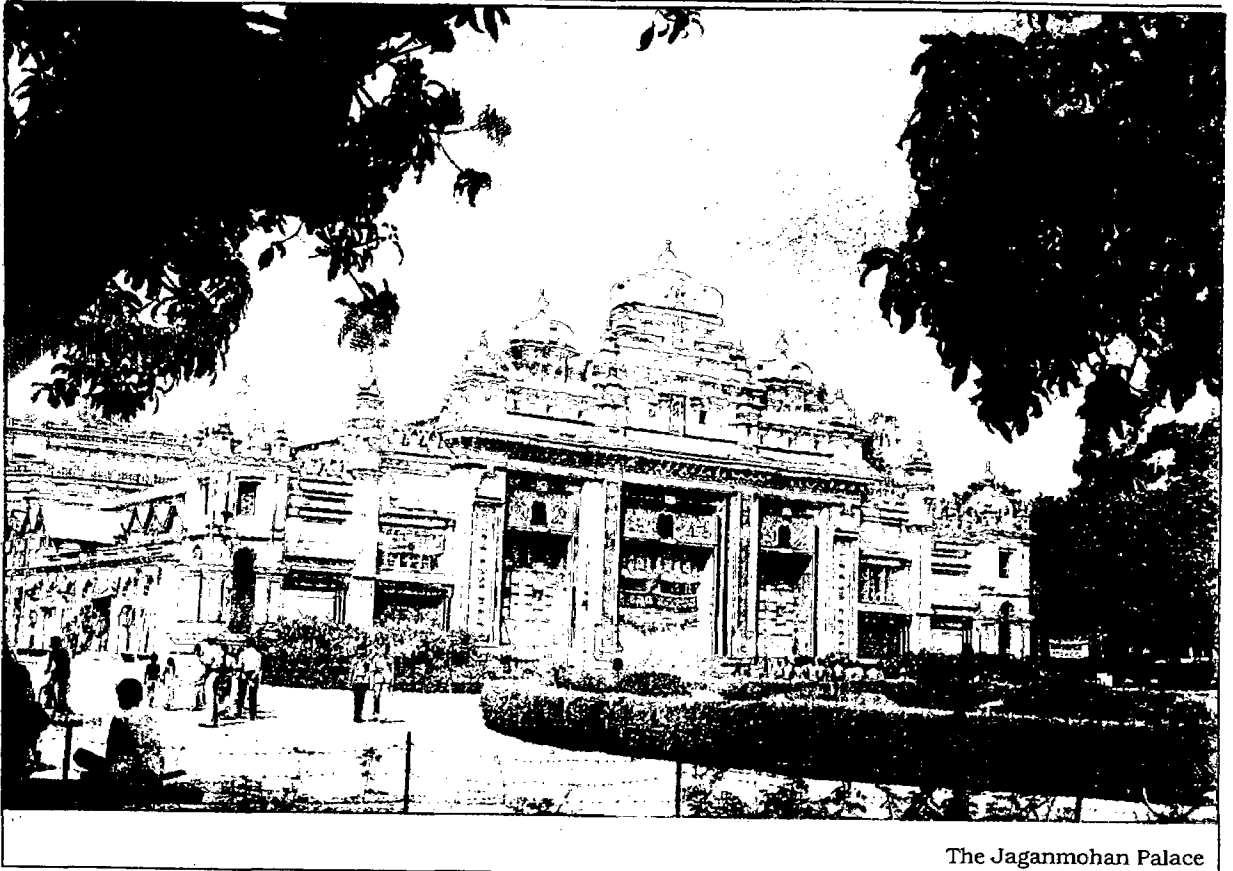
The world famous Mysore Palace

The Mysore Palace is the abode of Wodeyar Kings. It is also known as the *Amba Vilas*.

Palace apart from being a residential centre, serves as a court and centre of all Royal activities.

Fire Havoc in 1897

The Mysore Palace situated in the fort, which



The Jaganmohan Palace

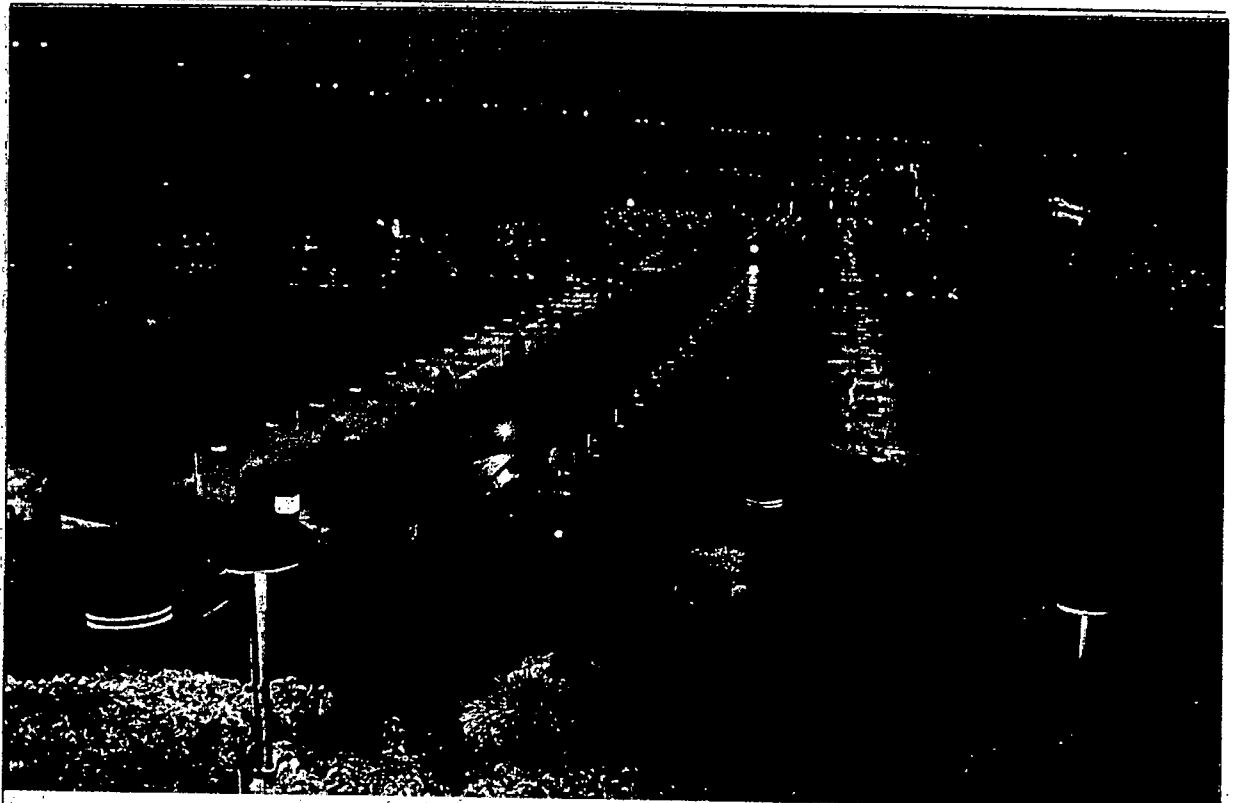
was the residential place of the Wodeyars of Mysore caught fire on 20th February 1897, just before the celebration of the marriage of the eldest Princess Jayalakshmi Ammanni. This caused irreparable damage to the Palace. One fifth of the building was destroyed, which consists of the *Sajje* and the three storeys rising above it upto the Golden pinnacles, the Sanskrit Library, the armoury, the music room and the *Balkhana* area. Besides this the newly constructed Ambavilas or Durbar Hall the wood work was completely destroyed, and eight persons died in this incident. Also 30,054 square feet area was destroyed.

After this incident a committee consisting of P.N. Krishna Murthy, member of the Council, Col. Bewen, Chief Engineer, and Secretary at Public Works Department, Sri S.M. Fraser Tutor and Governor to His Highness the Maharaja, and was appointed to investigate the causes at the outbreak of the fire and the circumstances attending it. This catastrophe of 1897 for some time cast a gloom all over the state. As an alternative arrangement the ruling family shifted to Jaganmohan palace situated just near the present Palace.

New Construction

Then the construction of

new Palace on the old site was started immediately. The design of the new palace was prepared by Henry Irwin of Madras. The design was adopted, Irwin was paid a fee of Rs. 12,000 and work started in August 1897. A large number of masons and other workmen from all over India were brought in. The Government of Mysore gave directions regarding the reconstruction saying that stone brick and iron should be used as chief materials, and the use of wood and other combustible materials should be minimum. And this order was strictly followed in the construction. The various types of stones available in



World famous Brindavan Garden.

the State were used for the construction. The masons from Trichinopoly, Madras and other districts from Southern India were able to work only with pointed chisels but they learnt from their brethren of Kolhapur Jaipur and other places in Northern India, to work with sharp-edged chisels, and were also able to do exquisite carving. The decoration of the Durbar Hall was entrusted to the Travancore artist Ravi Varma and his brother Raja Varma.

Rapid steps were undertaken to complete the reconstruction work. Its estimated that about Rs. 41.50 lakhs was spent on it's

reconstruction and the work was completed in 1911-12. Then it was once again occupied by the Royal family. Dasara festival and Durbar also were started in the new venue.

Various Departments

The administration of the Palace was reorganised. It was looked after by three major departments and eight minor departments with a general office of management. The officers heading the Palace departments were variously designated such as Bakshi, Mokhtesar, Manager, Superintendent, and Inspector etc. Gurikars were the subordinates of the

executive officers. The heads of the ministerial branches were designated as Sheristedar. One essential feature of the Palace service was the *Hakdari* System, according to which the eldest son or the other senior heir of a retired or deceased palace employee had to be given preference while filling up the vacancy if the applicant fulfilled the necessary qualifications required for the post. The different departments were as follows.

Armani Duftar Cutchery

This cutchery was a general office of record for the Palace to which all papers

required for official correspondence were preserved. This department also kept the genealogy of the Maharaja and his relations, rules of precedence, customs, inventories of the Palace property etc. This department gradually lost its identity and merged with the Palace controller in 1905.

Kille Cutchery

This department consisted of group of soldiers, whose main duty was to provide guards for the forts and Palace and escorts of body guards. This force consisted of eight companies each comprising forty-eight sepoy, four *Havaldars* four *Naiks*, one *Subedar* and two *Jamedars*. One of the eight companies permanently placed at the disposal of the zillo cutchery to provide necessary escorts from time to time to the Maharaja and his relatives. Before 1868 this department was known as *Brar* cutchery. The head of this department was known as *Bakshi*.

Zillo Cutchery

The main duty of the zillo cutchery was to regulate and undertake all arrangements connected with the escorts and processions. It consisted of the *Rachaiwar* and *Ballay* forces. The *Rachaiwar* was chiefly employed as trustworthy guards in the interior apartments of the

Palace, where admission was not allowed to the more miscellaneous classes of sepoy. The *Ballay* or spearmen provided some of the outside guards but they were extensively employed as escorts for the *Rajah* and his relations. They represented the *Bedar* (hunters) community.

Chamundi Thotti

Earlier this department was known as *Nama Thirthada Thotti*. It comprised of religious employees of

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different kinds maintained for purposes of worship in the several palace shrines, and for assisting their Highness in worship. It had ninety six religious employees of different kinds, one hundred *Pandits*, twelve honorary religious men and thirteen young scholars. The department also used to attend to the special religious functions such as *upakarma*,

birthday, marriage, *Dasara* etc. In the Palace *santharpanes* in connection with certain religious ceremonies and festival occasions were arranged by this department. *Prasadam*s sent by various temples and the *khillats* sent by *mutts* were received by this department. This department was headed by a *Bakshi* assisted by a *mokhtesar*.

Indoor Establishments

This establishment consisted of *Samookada Ooligar*, which was the oldest department of the Palace. This department comprised only indoor servants, and divided into two subdivisions, the *Khas* and the *Zenana*. The *khas* consisted of the cooks, water bearers, and other personal attendants. The *Hasige Bakkas* (Highness beddings) valuable carpets etc, were under their control. This department also attended to the palace culinary concerns with a staff of trained cooks, water bearers and other necessary servants for the purpose.

Zenana Department

Under the *Zenana* department of the *samookada ooligai* had been placed under three distinct services. The *ooligai* people were the insignia bearers. The *gollurs* kept the keys of all the apartments and would wait at

the doors. The *avairs* or female attendants were the servants of the *zenana*.

Out-side Establishments

The outside establishments were the *Aswasala*, *Gajasala*, with carriages and elephants *Kurrohotty* with cart bullocks were placed under one *Goorkar*. They provide for an establishment of 44 horses and 15 elephants including the state horse and the elephant and thirty pairs of cart bullocks.

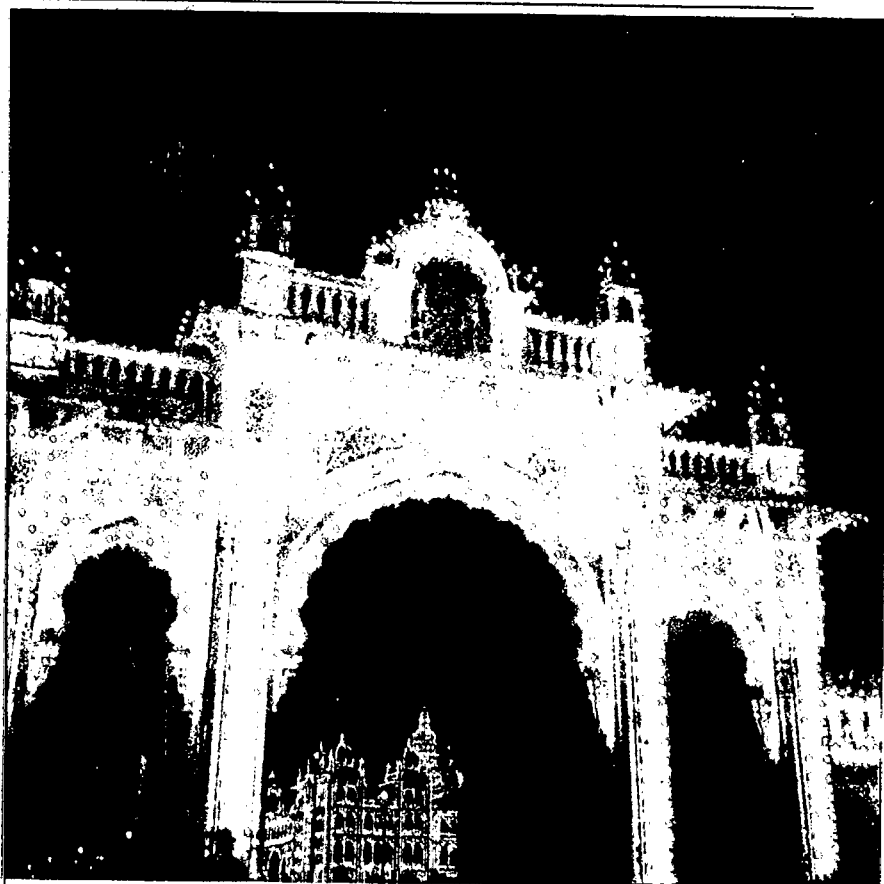
Maramat Department

This department was organised in 1868 consists of workmen and artisans of different kinds and a staff of *kamaties* and *chengoolies* for sweeping the palace, besides a reserve for miscellaneous duties. This work was supervised by the *gurikars* and the *sheristedars*.

General Office

This department consisted of a small staff of clerks and accountants and a comparatively small treasury and supply establishments. This department was under the control of an officer incharge of palace duties. The payment of all employees of the palace and other accounts maintained by the treasury.

Thus the palace administration looked after by various officers appointed by the Wodeyars during their



Main gate of Mysore Palace

regime. They appointed their relatives and loyalists to the key posts. As and when required they made alternations in the system of administration.

Thus the Palace centre of administration had its own system. The fort in which the Palace at present is situated has its own history. In 1399 it was a small fort with mud walls. It was this fort rescued by Yaduraja and Krishnaraja in 1399 from the Karugahalli usurper. There are evidences to show that this fort was constructed or enlarged by Bettada Chamaraja Wodeyar-III in 1524.

In 1616 Raja Wodeyar reconstructed the fort and its walls. It was he who laid the foundations to the present outer walls of the fort. Again on 1638 Raja Wodeyar strengthened the walls and rebuilt a great part of the palace which had been struck by lightning. In 1793 Tippu Sultan raised the fort to the ground and employed the materials in the erection of another fortress called *Nazarabad*. Again in 1800 after the death of Tippu Sultan the walls of *Nazarabad* were demolished and the same materials were used in rebuilding the present walls of the fort on the old foundations.